# Omorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 10 Issue 17 Wednesday, October 19, 2016



## Buying the Haunted House of Your Dreams By Sora O'Doherty



t's nearly Halloween, and some people are searching for an entertaining haunted house, but . . . would you want to buy one? No, we don't have one for sale, but we have been collect-

ing some stories about what can happen when you want to buy — or sell — a house where someone has died.

Local Realtor Shiva Jafarzadeh has some ex-

perience in this area. If selling real estate is a science, selling homes where someone has died is an art, one that includes science and law. In the state of California, there are mandatory disclosures that must be made by a house vendor to the potential purchaser. For example, if someone has died in a house within three years, it must be disclosed, and by "in a house" we mean literally in the house, not just while living there, and the somebody means anybody, whether owner, visitor, repair person, even trespassers.

That's the basic legal requirement, but the art of real estate means that seventh sense a good real estate agent possesses understands that a potential purchaser might not be okay with a home where a death occurred, even if it was outside the legally required disclosure period. And that art extends to a sensitivity about the kind of death: was it the natural death of a person who had lived a long, full life? The death of a child? Or, so much worse, did a violent death occur in the property?

Let's assume that you want to sell a house where a death occurred more than three years ago. So you don't have to disclose, right? Legally, that might be true. But, trust us, you want to disclose. If you don't, do you know who will? Your neighbors. Remember, if the potential buyer comes out and asks about a death specifically, even longer than three years ago, the law requires you to disclose what you know.

... continued on page D6



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Page: D2 OUR HOMES 925-377-0977 Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2016

#### Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	9	\$900,000	\$3,700,000
MORAGA	5	\$700,000	\$1,270,000
ORINDA	6	\$1,112,000	\$1,725,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

#### **LAFAYETTE**

608 Burton Drive, \$1,775,000, 3 Bdrms, 3097 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 9-15-16; Previous Sale: \$475,000, 02-27-91

3949 Canyon Road, \$2,465,000, 4 Bdrms, 4897 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 9-22-16; Previous Sale: \$2,100,000, 02-16-06

3336 Hillside Terrace, \$1,430,000, 4 Bdrms, 2754 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 9-20-16; Previous Sale: \$804,000, 06-17-02

609 Laird Lane, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 2122 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 9-15-16; Previous Sale: \$835,000, 03-10-05

1185 Monticello Road, \$1,850,000, 3 Bdrms, 2298 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 9-20-16; Previous Sale: \$136,364, 06-29-07

1455 Purson Lane, \$1,015,000, 3 Bdrms, 3378 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 9-15-16; Previous Sale: \$359,000, 05-16-97

1268 Redwood Lane, \$3,700,000, 5 Bdrms, 5034 SqFt, 2012 YrBlt, 9-20-16; Previous Sale: \$1,120,000, 06-15-11

1255 Sunrise Ridge Drive, \$1,415,000, 4 Bdrms, 2970 SqFt, 1999 YrBlt, 9-23-16; Previous Sale: \$1,360,000, 05-29-15

3283 Theresa Lane, \$1,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 2630 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 9-21-16; Previous Sale: \$1,400,000, 09-21-16

#### **MORAGA**

1997 Ascot Drive #D, \$700,000, 3 Bdrms, 1728 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 9-22-16; Previous Sale: \$585,000, 10-31-14

140 Calle La Montana, \$775,000, 4 Bdrms, 2585 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 9-15-16; Previous Sale: \$1,332,000, 08-08-14

1419 Camino Pablo, \$1,270,000, 3 Bdrms, 2509 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 9-22-16; Previous Sale: \$745,500, 12-19-03

4 Dolores Court, \$760,000, 2 Bdrms, 1845 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 9-23-16; Previous Sale: \$435,000, 06-22-12

262 Rheem Boulevard, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 1644 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 9-15-16; Previous Sale: \$525,000, 10-18-10

#### **ORINDA**

112 Ardith Drive, \$1,390,000, 4 Bdrms, 2258 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 9-16-16

4 Crestview Court, \$1,112,000, 3 Bdrms, 1631 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 9-14-16; Previous Sale: \$641,000, 05-02-02

16 El Verano, \$1,725,000, 5 Bdrms, 2882 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 9-16-16; Previous Sale: \$985,000, 05-24-02

33 Overhill Road, \$1,140,000, 1 Bdrms, 1502 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 9-16-16; Previous Sale: \$659,000, 09-09-03

7 Santa Lucia Road, \$1,650,000, 3 Bdrms, 2471 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 9-23-16; Previous Sale: \$735,000, 09-25-97

25 Zander Drive, \$1,455,000, 4 Bdrms, 2387 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 9-22-16; Previous Sale: \$1,455,000, 09-22-16



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## The Early Bird Gets the Worm

By Andi Peterson Brown

Are you contemplating selling your home next spring? Believe it or not, it's not too early to begin your preparations. In fact, many Realtors use the slower winter months as exactly that: a time to help their spring sellers plan ahead. Below are some tips to be well-prepared and well-positioned if a 2017 spring sale is in your future.

- Connect with a Realtor early. As mentioned above, Realtors oftentimes use the winter months to prepare homes for the spring. If you get on our radar early, we have ample time to create the best sales and marketing strategy specific for your property.
- Get a handle on any repair work. If budget allows, it is common for sellers to make repairs on their home before it hits the MLS. Contractors book up fast and it can be stressful to try and get squeezed into their calendar. Get scheduled early and eliminate unnecessary stress.
- Know your title. Your Realtor can open up what's called a pre-sale escrow and pull a preliminary title report to ensure there are no red flags that could delay your sale. By looking at this document early, you have more time to address a potential issue and stay on schedule.
- Get out and about. It always pays to know what's going on in your neighborhood. Pick a few Sunday afternoons this winter and leisurely check out other homes for sale. Keep your finger on the pulse of your local market by seeing what prospective buyers are seeing.



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## Buying the Haunted House of Your Dreams

#### ... continued from page D1

Some houses may be considered "stigmatized," and subject to more stringent requirements. In a landmark case on stigmatized houses, the California Court of Appeals found that a "seller of real property has a duty to disclose: 'where the seller knows of facts materially affecting the value or desirability of the property which are known or accessible only to him and also knows that such facts are not known to, or within the reach of the diligent attention and observation of the buyer . . . "Reed v. King 145 Cal. App. 3d 261, 193 Cal. Rptr. 130 (Cal. Ct. App. 1983).

Are you ready for the scary stories? OK, we've got em! Here's one: Purchasers move into the home they've just bought. After a little while, they call their Realtor and ask, we know that no death in this house was disclosed, but are you sure? Because, they say, we hear noises in the garage at night, and we are convinced that it is a ghost. This case went to court. It turned out that a young man had committed suicide in the garage over 25 years earlier. His father discovered him in the morning, in the car with the motor running. But, was the garage haunted? Nope. The new owners heard the story from a neighbor and, being superstitious, they were looking for a way out of the deal. When all was revealed, they lost that case.

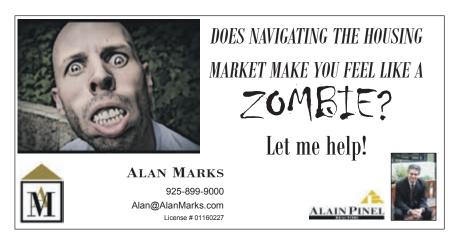
On the other hand, there actually is a niche market for haunted houses. So, while some people may eschew a house where a death has occurred, others are actively seeking a real haunted house, and might be willing to pay a premium for actual or suspected ghosts. On the other hand, a death in the house also makes a home a target for bargain hunters. Investment purchasers are not sentimental, and will try to snap up a hard-to-sell property cheaply and rent it for a few years, then sell it after the disclosure period has passed.

And disclosure is not the only legal hurdle you

may face. Jafarzadeh tells a story of a couple who found a beautiful, vacant house in an East Bay neighborhood. The house appeared to be totally remodeled and was vacant, but there were many personal belongings deposited in the backyard. There was a For Sale sign in front of the house. The price that the selling agent quoted was low. Shortly after their initial inquiry, the purchasers received a telephone call from a man who said he had inherited the house from his mother, but that the paperwork was not completed. The purchasers entered into a rent-to-buy agreement, sold their home and moved in.

Six months later, the "vendor" disappeared, and the purchasers, unable to find him, ceased making payments. Then they received a letter from an attorney. It turned out that the vendor had actually not inherited the house from his mother. He was one of seven siblings. His mother had died in a house fire at the property. The other siblings had not been notified of her death, but the purported vendor had used the insurance money to repair and remodel the house and place it on the market. The matter went to the probate court, where the rent-to-buy agreement was upheld for the purchaser, who bought the house, but that wasn't the end of their trouble. For example, on one occasion the vendor's sister showed up in the middle of the night with a shovel, removing the landscaping from the front yard, and that was not the last of her visits, which were never friendly and she was sometimes under the influence.

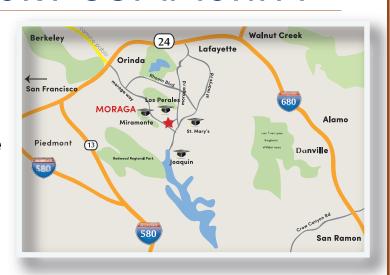
The takeaway? If you are the vendor, disclose everything! If you are a purchaser, make sure you ask outright about the things that are significant to you, including whether or not there has been a death or violent crime in the property. If all goes well, you might just find the haunted house of your dreams.





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## The Real Estate Quarter in Review

#### By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS

he third quarter of 2016 showed slowing activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate versus the year ago quarter. This slowdown in activity is based more upon a shorter supply of available properties than on a significant change in the market.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from July 1 through Sept.30, here's what single-family home activity looked like in Lamorinda's three cities.

#### Lafayette

Homes closed 2015 Price range Days on Market '15 '14 71 92 \$635,000 to \$3,700,000 30 24 22

The average sales price was \$1,565,394. In the same period of 2015 it was \$1,462,872 versus \$1,310,790 in 2014. The average 3Q 2013 sale price was \$1,204,739. In 3Q 2012 the average was \$1,001,291. Average prices have increased over 49 percent in the last four years!

#### Moraga

Homes closed	2015	2014	Price range	Days on Market	'15
21	49	50	\$1,015,000 to \$1,870,000	24	14

The average sale price was \$1,245,605, which was actually below the \$1,281,936 in the third quarter of 2015. It was \$1,178,956 in the same quarter in 2014. In 3Q 2012 the average was \$1,049,408. The average increase in the last four years has been around 19 percent.

#### Orinda

Homes closed 2015 2014 Price range Days on Market 73 69 90 \$750,000 to \$3,205,000 24

The average sale price was \$1,558,244, a slight increase from a year ago when it was \$1,520,904. In 2014, it was \$1,420,663. In 3Q 2012, the average was \$1,109,094. The four-year average increase in Orinda values has been about 40 percent.

In the third quarter of this year, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$585.96. A year ago it was \$573.91. Moraga homes sold for \$540.27 up from \$526.77 a year ago. In Orinda it was \$599.67... again an increase over the prior year third quarter of \$566.29.

... continued on page D11

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133 Warfield Dr., Moraga | Sold \$1,605,000



91 Orchard Rd., Orinda | Sold \$2,100,000



249 Ivy Place, Orinda | Sold \$1,200,000



107 Bates Ct., Orinda | Sold \$1.515.000



13 Gardiner Ct., Orinda | Offered at \$3,500,000



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## The Real Estate Quarter in Review

#### ... continued from page D8

In Lafayette, the average sales price was right at 100% of the final asking price. In Moraga it was also a fraction above 100 pecent and in Orinda it was 102.4 percent. In many cases, there were multiple offers on homes and the result was a closing price above the asking price.

In Lafayette, 39 of the 71 closings sold at the list price or above. In Moraga, 11 of the 23 sold at or above asking and in Orinda it was 44 of 73.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had five resale closings. They were priced from \$601,000 and \$1,100,000; Moraga had 25, down from 40 a year ago. Sales prices ranged from \$305,000 to \$1,100,000. Moraga Country Club had only two attached home sales — \$825,000 to \$1,100,000. Orinda had one condominium sale on Brookwood at \$319,000 and one townhome — in Orindawoods — at \$1,090,000.

As of Oct. 10, there were 65 pending sales in the three communities combined. A year ago there were 67 pending sales per the MLS. The asking prices for the pending single family detached homes range from \$719,000 to \$3,195,000. It should be pointed out that there are no "Potential Short Sales" that are currently pending and subject to lender approval. One of the pending sales is an REO (bank owned property).

It is interesting to point out that of the 65 pending sales in the area, 51 have received acceptable offers since Sept. 1. That is an average of nearly two per day. Usually many of the sales are completed prior to the start of school. Depending upon how many of the homes are being purchased by families with children who are new to Lamorinda, it may impact certain grades at the elementary level.

Inventory, however, continues to remain low although increasing when looking at the available homes. In Lafayette there were 45 on the market as of Oct. 10 and there were 32 at this time one year ago.

In Moraga buyers have their choice of only 25 properties, still way up from 10 properties a year ago.

Orinda inventory has increased to 46 currently available from 37 one year ago.

Current asking prices range from \$405,000 for a condominium in Moraga to \$22.5 million for an Orinda property.

At the high end, 26 homes closed above \$2 million in the three communities combined during the quarter. In the year ago period there were 29.

There are 47 currently available above this amount — 17 in Lafayette, 23 in Orinda, and seven in Moraga.

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### Digging Deep for October

## A Howling Harvest and Halloween

By Cynthia Brian

"Tickle it with a hoe and it will laugh into a harvest." English Saying



Time to pick the pumpkins and cut the corn stalks for the Halloween décor.

Photos Cynthia Brian ctober proclaims two main events: harvest and Halloween.

It's been several decades since I've worked in our vineyards picking grapes. As a child I drove a tractor, plowed fields and watered the new vineyards vine by vine, driving a refitted vintage fire truck with one sibling opening the water valve as we slowly rolled through the rows. Once September and October arrived, the grape harvest began. Crews of eight workers, including myself, combed every vine with our specially curved knife quickly dropping bunches of ripe berries into the lugs which would be dumped into big bins on the grape trailer. When the truck and trailer had a full load, we'd ride with my dad to the wineries for the delivery. We all loved being with our dad hauling the grapes to their wine destination.



Beautiful bunches of grapes are ripe and ready.

Although we worked on numerous neighboring farms harvesting, culling or cutting peaches, apricots and pears, none of us were fans of the grape picking process.

Because of the dearth of available pickers, a couple of years ago my brother invested in a mechanical harvester. This week, on the final night of the cabernet sauvignon harvest, I rode along with my brother and nephew as the huge harvester and four men did the work of six crews with precision and speed. (Instead of picking during the heat of the day, the harvester allows harvesting at night into the early morning hours when it is cooler.) Although we still have several acres that are hand picked, I hollered "hallelujah" to this happy mechanical harvesting experience.

Lamorinda boasts a rich grape growing precedent with a 130-year-old history. The Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, (www.LamorindaWine-Growers.com) dedicated to sustainable farming and community building, is re-establishing the area's love of the vine and wine along with our pleasant pear past. Lamorinda is now a recognized wine region with its own viticulture appellation thanks to the hard work of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association. The varietals grown throughout Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga span the French Bordeaux area with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot to the Rhone regions' Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Viognier. .... continued on page D13



925-377-0977

Autumn hosta and heuchera accent a corner with a copper grasshopper.



Burgundy is represented by the Pinot Noir grape and Lamorindans also grow small amounts of Sangiovese and Chardonnay. Because the plots are small, grapes are hand picked. A mechanical harvester has not become a necessary piece of equipment...yet. I'm hoping that 2016 will be heralded as a prime vintage year.

Preparing for Halloween, it's time to harvest the pumpkins, gourds and winter squash. If you don't grow your own, you'll find funky as well as colorful pumpkins at the local farmers market and even many of the grocery stores. Apples and Asian pears are still hanging from the trees awaiting their reaper. Find a recipe for making caramel or candied apples to enjoy an old-fashioned treat. Cut your corn stalks to use in decorations and buy a hay bale to add to the décor. You can later use the hay to cover your newly planted vegetable patch. The hay mulch will keep most weeds from emerging as the ghosts, ghouls and goblins begin their rampage.

It's time to howl at the moon with a glass of Lamorinda produced wine! Enjoy a grape adventure!



## MORAGA **GARDEN** CENTER

## **Annual Fall Sale** Up to 50% off **Through October 31st**

Free Plants with Purchase

Moraga Garden Center located at the Moraga Shopping Center 925-376-1810





Page: D14 LAMORINDA WEEKLY OUR HOMES www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977 Wednesday, October 19, 2016

## Mid Month Gardening Tips from Cynthia Brian

The next two months are busy ones in the garden as we prepare our beds for a winter's sleep. Chrysanthemums will be displaying their full glory soon, a certain beacon of the blazing fall colors to follow. Get out there and get it done now.

**FERTILIZE** lawns during the rain for faster absorption. Don't forget to re-seed during these wet days as well.

**PULL** any weeds you find in your garden before they develop seed heads.

**CREATE** a sunflower arch for a festive October wine fest.

**PLANT** a variety of lettuces in a window box or container kept close to your kitchen to keep your salads fresh all season Clip the micro greens as they sprout for delicate, delicious delights.

**REPAIR** birdhouses so that overwintering birds such as bluebirds, chickadees, and nuthatches will have a warm, safe, cozy place to rest during the upcoming cold nights.

**INCREASE** bird feeders in your yard as birds consume more food in fall and winter.

**TUNE** up your garden by pruning back overgrown shrubs and adding three or five New Zealand flax for their spiky form and variegated colors.

**DIG** and divide iris rhizomes now. Make sure to keep a few inches of the leaves on the stems and bury the roots two inches deep, 18 to 20 inches apart.

**WATCH** the antics of the lizards as they sun themselves on rocks during these final days of warmth.



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### PRUNING NOW PAYS LATER

The type of pruning your tree gets is critical to the health, longevity, safety and appearance. Proper care for your tree is important and pruning a healthy strong tree now will help with the prevention of storm damage.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by your local ISA Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service for all your tree care needs.

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Although fall is usually sienna-hued, Chorisia silk floss tree is spectacularly pink!

**STOP** watering remaining summer crops to force your final produce to ripen.

**PRUNE** your berry bushes, including summer raspberries, blackberries and blueberries by removing dead canes. Thin any new forming canes.

**AMEND** your hard clay soil with large amounts of compost.

**MULCH** with wood chips to prevent erosion and maintain temperate soil temperatures.

**MAKE** a beautiful arrangement of fall flowers and foliage snipped from your trees and bushes.

**FREEZE** or can your vine tomatoes before the rains rot them.

ENROLL in a course on edible gardening, native plants or composting.

**PROPOGATE** perennials through root cuttings.

**INDULGE** in forest bathing ... or just take a walk in nature.

**SAVE** seeds from your favorite annuals, herbs, and vegetables by gathering, drying, labeling and storing.

**HARVEST** the remainder of ripe produce before the end of the month-apples, Asian Pears, peppers, Swiss chard.

**IMPROVE** your health by enjoying grapes, apples, pears, pumpkins and squash. **ROAST** seeds from squash and pumpkins by first cleaning, drying, soaking in salted water, then, baking at 375 degrees until golden brown. What a healthy snack! **TIE** dried corn stalks together to add to your front door fall décor.

Happy Gardening, Happy Growing, Happy Harvested Halloween!

Patch



925-377-0977

Variegated New Zealand flax flaunts its spiky fall colors.



Cynthia Brian joins her nephew, Alfred III and her brother, Alfred II for the grape harvest.

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5 Darnby Court Classic Orinda ranch home! 3bd/2.5ba, 1,942 sq ft. Formal living & dining, eat-in kitchen, sunny yard, family room could be 4th bedroom. Culde-sac location & walk to top schools! \$1,090,000

**ORINDA** 

**244 El Tovonal** Forever views across Orinda to Mt. Diablo. Delightful living spaces on 2 levels w/modern remodeled kitchen; living rm & dining rm open to outside w/extensive decking/ views. Bonus \$1,299,000

# **ORINDA**

31 Parkway Court Incredible Location! This 1797 sq. ft. 4bd/3ba charmer sits at the end of a cul-de-sac on a large .56 acre lot. Updated throughout, open floor plan, walk to Glorietta Elementary!

**ORINDA** 

114 Hillcrest Drive Glorietta neighborhood stylish Craftsman 4bd/3ba all rebuilt to perfection in 2008. Beaut. design highest quality, great room w/gourmet kitchen, Anderson doors, views, level lawns. Great schools. \$1,495,000

#### **ORINDA**



220 Camino Sobrante Special location on the lake. Classic, wood crafted 4bd/4ba home has great use of space on two levels, ideal for comfortable living & entertaining. Bonus sports court. Alluring setting of beauty & privacy. \$1,695,000

#### **ORINDA**



147 Camino Don Miguel Set on private, lush .32ac overlooking 4th fairway of OCC. 3bd/2.5ba w/apx, 3223sf, hdwd flrs, main flr master ste, ofc/den, sun porch. Near top-rated schools, Orinda Village & commute. Views! \$1,850,000

#### **ORINDA**



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#### **ORINDA**



160 Camino Don Miguel Spectacular Spanish Mediterranean 5bd/5.5ba 5851sf home overlooks the 4th hole of OCC. Rebuilt from ground up in 1996. Resort quality pool & spa, gardens & views.

\$4,795,000

#### **MORAGA**



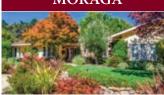
670 Augusta Drive Updated & ready to move in! Kitchen w/cherry cabinets, granite & Brazilian cherry flrs thruout main flr. Gardens, private patio. Rare 3 BR+ bonus rm. Close to clubhouse, facilities. Walk to town! \$1,149,000

#### **MORAGA**



735 Augusta Drive Detached desirable Moraga Country Club plan 13 home on large .42 acre lot with pool, hot tub & flagstone patio. Large master suite upstairs with deck, walk-in closet & views!

#### **MORAGA**



76 Lynwood Place Desirable Corliss neighborhood. 4 bedroom, 2.5 bath home with sparkling pool. Close to schools, shopping and trails.

\$1,695,000

#### **MORAGA**



9 Shannon Court

Sanders Ranch estate property over 1.5 acres, 4966 sq. ft., Chef 's kitchen, hardwood, new carpet, fresh paint, pool, ideal indoor/ outdoor living spaces.

\$3,125,000

#### LAFAYETTE



3 Dollis Park Road

Large 4bd/3.5ba, 4090 sq. ft. home w/ideal functional floor plan. Lovely kitchen/ family rm + bonus rec. rm. Luxurious master suite. Great guest bedroom w/bath is ideal for separation \$1,489,000

#### **OAKLAND**

\$1,149,000



6430 Colby Street

Charming 3bd/2ba craftsman home + bonus studio apt. on quiet block in prime Rockridge area. Hardwood floors, skylights, built-in bookcases. Private yard. Walk to shops & \$1,065,000



156 Brodia Way

New construction by KT Builders, a local, high-end home builder. Captivating views of Mt. Diablo & La Casa Via Valley. High ceilings, open floor plan & large .92 acre lot \$1,699,000 at end of cul de sac.

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